

Frequently Asked Questions

What is federation?

Federation is when two or more schools join up to deliver a single vision for how to educate all of their pupils. Leadership staff and governors become responsible for what happens at both schools, and the schools work together to make best use of resources for the benefit of the children.

Are Mrs Bland's Infant School and Garland Junior School merging?

No. Federation is not the same thing as two schools becoming one. They will still get government funding as two separate schools and will be considered separately by OFSTED.

Why are we thinking about federating? Is there a serious problem?

No. There are no serious issues that are forcing us to think about federation. This is an option to improve education at the schools for the long term.

What are the benefits of joining a federation?

- Consistency in how children are taught from Reception to Year 6 - for example, using the same phonics scheme
- Consistency in policies - for example, around managing absence or behaviour
- Support for all children, especially those with additional needs, can be more joined up
- Some expected financial benefits- for example, the schools can buy resources in bulk and use a single HR provider.
- Staff can have more opportunities for personal and career development- for example, by leading a subject area in both schools. Better staff development may make recruitment easier.
- Staff can call on expertise and support from more colleagues
- Communication with parents will be more consistent across the two schools

We think all of these things will help the children's development and attainment.

Why make a new federation? Why not join another federation that already exists?

Making a new federation will mean that the unique character of the two schools in Burghfield Common will be protected and recognises the strong links that already exist between them. Mrs Bland's is the main feeder school to Garland, so it makes sense that the schools continue working together in a new federation to provide continuity to the children and families.

How will this affect admissions to the school?

There will be no change to admissions. Parents will still have to apply for admissions to each school separately, for entry in Reception and again for the start of year 3.

Will the children be taught at two locations?

The pre-school and Reception to Year 2 will stay at Mrs Bland's site. Years 3- 6 will stay at the Garland site. Children will not move between the two sites during a school day.

Will the uniform change?

The uniform will not change.

Will children be taught by lots more different teachers?

Classes will still have a main teacher or a job-share arrangement, as now. Some staff may eventually work across the two schools but no-one will be forced to do this.

Who will be leading the schools?

If federation happens, there will be a change in the leadership structure. At the moment, each school has a headteacher and a deputy headteacher. In the proposal we explain that we think this should change to an Executive Head who leads both schools and is supported by a Head of School at each of the two schools. We chose this model because it means a single leader is accountable to the federation governing board, which we deemed to be an important factor. Our research also indicated that for the size of federation, this was the correct model.

What else will change?

The two governing boards of the schools will dissolve, and a new single governing board will be made. The details are set out in the proposal document. We think the proposed structure gives good representation to parents and staff at both schools.

What do I need to do now?

If you have any questions about the proposal and what it means, you can email the clerk to the governors at either school at jthompson@garland.w-berks.sch.uk or cclerk@mrsblands.w-berks.sch.uk

If you want to tell us your views, there are a variety of methods to do so. Please see section J of the proposal to find the most convenient one for you. To make sure we are listening to everyone fairly, please only send in one response.

What is the deadline to send my response?

The deadline for sending your response is 17:00 Friday 7th July 2023.

What happens next? Is there a vote?

The governing bodies of both schools will consider all the responses and decide what to do next. They may decide to go ahead with the proposal, go ahead with an amended plan, or not go ahead at all. Legally the decision is made by the governors, not by public vote. That is why it is very important that you raise any thoughts, questions or concerns now.

Where can I find more information on federation?

The government site www.gov.uk, and the National Governance Association site www.nga.org.uk contain a lot of useful information, guidance and legislation for federation.